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Hodgkin. Sermon at Arch St. Meeting House, in Philadelphia. 1861

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SERMON PREACHED BY JOHN HODGKIN,

MINISTER OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, FROM ENGLAND,

At Arch Street Meeting House, in Philadelphia,

10Mo. (OCT.) 17, 1861.

In a time of great darkness and sorrow in the history of the nations of Israel, this language was used in their midst: "Oh! that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion; when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad." It may seem strange, dear friends, that I, who am here under deep humblings of heart and many discouragements, and at a time of peculiar trial to you also, should have to use a language that points to deliverance and joy. But it cannot seem more strange to you than it has to me. Yet I feel that I dare not think my own thoughts, nor speak my own words—and I believe that I may say that the breathing of my spiritual mind has been,—and cannot you, dear friends, join it?—"Oh, that the salvation of Israel *were* come out of Zion!" For truly, after all that has been done or suffered and known among us as individuals and as a people, it remains to be a truth, which the believer, who walks amid darkness and discouragement may apply to himself, and which the church militant, now in humiliation and distress, but ere long to be triumphant and glorified, may also apply,—that "when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

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Another word of encouragement from prophecy seems also to revive in my heart with much freshness, and to be in harmony with the foregoing: "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion." But, dear friends, we have it not in promise and in prophecy only; let us listen to the words of our dear Master himself, in His last memorable prayer for his disciples: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as Thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." Here we see that it pleased our Lord that there should be unity in His body, the church; that His garment should not be rent. But it is the will of the enemy that there shall be disunity and divisions in the body, in order that there may be weakness and faltering and a turning from the truth. And, dear friends, when I was under the awfully humbling hand of my God upon me in my own country, I was brought into much trembling of spirit, in the thought of coming into this land, where truly I have not come to serve any purpose of my own, but simply, I trust, to do the bidding of my Heavenly Master—when, I say, I was humbled under the Lord's preparing hand in the prospect of it, there was given to me a view, in some degree, of your spiritual trials as a Society, and also of some outward trials as a nation, such as none in my own country, or even in yours, then saw coming upon you. As I sat in my own little meeting, it seemed clear to me that I was coming to a land of civil war; and I had a little faith granted me, that in that day "when men's hearts should fail them for fear, 'and all faces are turned into paleness,' and in the season when the 'secrets of many hearts shall be revealed,'" the Lord would own my imperfect work, weak as is the instrumentality, and would bless it to the tendering of many hearts. And so it has been as I have gone up and down among you in feebleness and fear, speaking not "the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost

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teacheth," endeavoring to declare the whole message of the Prince of Peace. And thus I humbly believe many who have long held the blessed doctrines of the truth as it is in Jesus, have been encouraged to hold fast their faith and confidence—the wavering have been strengthened to stand firm, and those who were afar off, have been invited to draw nigh, and come and partake of "that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and join in a union which is far beyond any outward one—even the blessed union of the "one Spirit in the one body, even as we are called in one hope of our calling."

But never have I seen more clearly than as I have been led up and down, throughout this land, among all those who call themselves by the name of Friends, whether collected together in large assemblies, or in small and scattered gatherings, that secession is not the true remedy for distress or difficulties. I feel that it is not God's method of helping the weakness and troubles of His flock, and the prayer of my heart is that not only my dear young friends may receive this as a parting message from a brother who loves them well, but that it may come home to the hearts of my dear aged brethren and sisters also, who, under many and various trials and difficulties, have, I believe, earnestly sought to exercise a sound judgment, and have many times honestly believed themselves to be acting according to the mind of the Lord. The desire of my heart is, that both classes may—in this day of humiliation—be so melted and contrited together, that their hearts shall be welded to one another, and they shall together cleave fast hold to the profession of their faith without wavering, holding the simple truth as it is in Jesus. For this truth was, as I believe, after many dark ages of apostacy, revived by the worthy forefathers of our beloved Society, who, preaching under the Lord's true anointing the unsearchable riches of Christ, brought many souls to a knowledge of Him, and led them to the foot of His cross. Oh, that you may be so welded together in love, even though it be through the furnace of affliction, that you may all retain fast hold of the ancient principles of our beloved So-

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ciety, and may be brought to see, in spite of, perhaps, all your previous judgments and preconceived opinions, that, if it be Satan's purpose to divide, it is God's purpose to draw together and unite. Ah, my dear friends, if you do not see it before, you will surely be brought to see it on your death-beds, that it is His purpose to make His church one in Him, and you will feel that you cannot leave this world without the blessed assurance, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Then you will see it is not right to stay the work of one who can do any thing in the name of the Lord and to serve his cause, even though in many things, *that one* may seem to walk in a different path from your own. Ah, how clear is the example set before us in the life of our Lord, when His disciples, verily thinking they were doing God service, came to Him, telling Him,—"Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." Surely, if ever a want of outward conformity in all things would be unsuitable, if ever a perfect identity of life and walk would be required among those who work in the name of Jesus, it would have been then when Divinity walked among them, and they saw him perfect in all His ways, setting them a perfect example. But He who had all power in heaven and in earth—He who loves His own church far better than we can love it—He who so loved it that He gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,—He said—"Forbid him not." What a lesson here for us, dear friends! The earnest prayer of my heart is, that my beloved young friends not only may not take their flight, as in the winter season, or on a Sabbath day, because they are not fed,—because they do not see that holiness of walk, or that oneness of spirit among their elder friends, that they think ought to be; but that there may be among them also, an increasing searching of heart, a more fer-

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vent travail of spirit, and a deeper personal engagement to know for themselves the truth as it is in Jesus. For much as I desire that all those who profess the principles of our beloved Society, may be bound together in unity, I feel that there is an interest at stake, more important than even our precious discipline—more important than any apparent outward unity —more important than what might be called that spiritual patriotism which longs for the extending of the borders of Zion, for the lengthening of her cords and the strengthening of her stakes,—and that is, our individual soul's salvation—thy soul, my brother—thy soul, my sister—the preparation of thy heart to meet thy God! Whatever may be the position of our beloved church, whatever its trials or its prospects, it is all of no account, by the side of the awful importance of that moment when the messenger shall come to declare to thee that time shall be no longer!

Beloved friends, there is one all important question compared to which the weakness or strength of any Society, or the rise or fall of empires even, are as NOTHING, and that question concerns the salvation of souls, of thy own soul, my brother! Hast thou known a repentance unto life? Hast thou, when God's Holy Spirit has set thy sins before thee, and made thee groan under the burden of them, hast thou known those sins to be forgiven thee? Hast thou believed in the efficacy of that blood that speaketh better things than that of Abel? Hast thou submitted thy heart to the sanctifying power of the spirit of truth? Hast thou allowed it to cleanse the "inside of the cup and the platter"—to cleanse the world out? Hast thou been made, by its powerful operations, indifferent to worldly pleasures and honours, feeling them as dross, compared to the joy of having thy own name written in the Lamb's book of life? Our blessed Saviour said to His disciples when they "returned to Him with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name—'in this rejoice not that the devils are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'" And whilst some faint

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hopes have been at times raised in my heart, that I might be permitted to repair some of the rents in our Society, and I have felt that there is no sacrifice, not even life itself, which I would not make, if I might be but even as a little drop of balm upon your wounds; yet, far beyond this have I desired to be made the means of blessing to even one soul. And if it please God to grant me to feel this, even this morning, with regard to thee, my unknown brother or sister, my heart would indeed rejoice and give thanks. Oh, think not to say—"I know not how to take any step, because of the divisions that are among us—or because the word of the Lord has not free course in our midst." Ah, this will not do! And yet I believe, my dear aged friends, that more than from any other cause, unbelief among our younger members arises from the unfaithfulness of those to whom they think they have a right to look for help and encouragement, from their uncertain language with regard to the blessed doctrines of the gospel, and by their not seeing in those who profess to be guided by it, the fruit of the Spirit leading to unity and love and charity, to a watchful care over the lambs of the flock, and to a growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Ah, we must see to it that we do not cause the lambs to wander.

And yet, my dear young friends, we know notwithstanding, who is the truth, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who declares of Himself, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." And though *thou* shouldst be the only one in all the world who believed this, yet if thou didst believe it, and wouldst come to Him and trust in Him, thou shouldst be saved! But remember, my dear young friends, that though some of your older friends may seem to be walking in some darkness, and it may be, making many mistakes, you must not suppose that they do not love the Lord. Oh, I believe many of them do love Him, have loved Him long, and will continue to love Him, even though they may do some things that seem to you wrong. Judge them not, but pray rather for your own souls and for

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unity, and be persuaded that every one who loves the Lord will find, notwithstanding all hindrances and perplexities, a safe path to walk in, and will find duties to be performed, even though all things may look discouraging and disheartening, and a field of service from which no man will be able to shut them out. I believe there are lambs of the flock now present, who, if they keep in a spirit of meekness, avoiding all judging, and obeying the voice of their Master when He says, "What is that to thee? follow thou me," will know a growth in grace and in the knowledge of Him, and will be made pillars in the house of their God. Oh, how will the hearts of some of their older friends, even it may be those who have seemed to fail in sympathy with them, be gladdened by the faithfulness of these, and their spirits refreshed by the devotedness of their walk. But you may ask, "how can we labor *together* in this work of building the house of our God?" Be not too anxious to know this—be willing to arise and repair that part of the breach that is before thy own door, and be assured, that though they may be unseen by thee, and thou may know it not, God has other laborers at work in like manner, and though they may seem to be beyond the sound of thy voice, yet one day He will give thee to see that when the trumpet is sounded they will come to your help.

My beloved friends, I do not believe the Lord sent me to enter into any disciplinary questions among you—ah, no! but He has graciously permitted me to come to you, as those called by the dear name of Friends, for the purpose of rousing the unconverted and feeding the lambs of the flock—and not to settle knotty questions. Yet He may see fit to show some in this assembly, through my feeble instrumentality, the duty of striving after more unity, not looking back at the things which are behind, and of pressing forward "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," which mark is Christian perfection, and the prize eternal life. But you ask, how *can* we draw nearer together? Beloved friends, is not this the way? because we love Him, to love each other

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also. Surely, all in one family can love each other, even though there be diversities of character, and all in a meeting can love each other, why not then all in a city? Oh, how my spirit was oppressed under the weight of this concern which dwelt long with me, and how deeply have I desired that you, as a Yearly Meeting, might love each other and draw nearer together, no matter what difficulties or barriers may seem to divide you; and especially that you in this city might be more closely united by the bond of Christian love.

It rarely happens to me to know beforehand of what will be given me for any particular occasion, but this, to you of the four meetings of this city of brotherly love, has for some time been clear before me, and my message to you now is, *strive to be one*,—keep not distant one from another, but draw nearer and nearer together. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind," striving together, not only for the faith of the gospel, but also "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Then would you gently lead the young of the flock, and would often go and sit down with them, to help and strengthen them—and then might the Lord's dedicated servants, whether ministers or elders, feel that not only was their place of service in their own particular meeting, but they would be drawn to go and sit down with their friends in the other meetings, having, perhaps, at times, a word given them to comfort and cheer, and they would thus find that he that watereth, shall be watered also himself. This is possible it is true to each in their own meeting, yet, I believe I speak not my own words when I say it must not rest there—that there is strength to be derived from communion. I believe, also, that there are elements of usefulness in many places among you, of diverse

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characters perhaps, from just that which some of yours may be, but calculated to do much good in the Lord's work. And so far from regretting it, I could rejoice in this very diversity, as being likely to result in a very wide-spread diffusion of good. As it is among the ancient nation of the Jews, scattered, as they are, over all the world, born in different countries, with diversities, customs and manners, yet all bearing traces of belonging to one family, all having about them somewhat that proclaims them to be Jews; so in the Lord's spiritual Israel, there are many and great diversities—diversities of gifts, of natural mind, of training, and of circumstances, yet one spirit and one Lord and one common Father. And when all these diversities work together in the unity of the spirit and in love, I believe there does result more good to the body than there could from a greater uniformity of character and feeling. All work must rest on one foundation—"for other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,"—but upon this foundation there may be differences of structure, according to the part of the building, which the Master has set his servants to work upon, yet all must be living stones, cemented together by the uniting bond of His spirit of love and charity.

Waste not then, I beseech you, (and now I speak to my dear elder friends,)—waste not your energies in judging the work of others, but ask the Lord to give you grace to labor each one in his own place, but to labor together with each other and with God.

Some it may be have dwelt more upon the doctrine of the indwelling spirit, and have made greater sacrifices, in a sincere desire to obey its voice; others have had a different experience, having been led, partly from education, partly perhaps, from their own frame of mind, to dwell more on the doctrinal parts of the truth. But let not these latter despise their brethren, who have walked in the narrower path. It may be they need counsel from these, that some things in their walk in the church or in the world, are not as they should be, and their brethren whose attention has been more turned to the path of sacrifice

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and obedience, could in these things give them help, could point out their inconsistencies to them, and could help them to go on to perfection. Ah, it is not for me to point out, although I see it, where you differ, but rather where you agree! Surely it should not be said with regard to you, that "even the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Yet, dear friends, in times of outward trial, the children of this world forget their private difficulties, and unite against a common foe. One state does not hold off from another state, or one portion of a state from another portion, because of minor differences.

And how it causes sorrow and disappointment when one part of a company of armed men fires upon another part of the same. How we mourn over that volley which lays our own friends low! But not so ranked should those be, who serve under the Captain of our Salvation, who would give us such a spirit of love and unity as that, though difficulties surround and beset us we might still *together* seek His glory and strive together against the common enemy of our souls. I hope, then, beloved friends, that hereafter, when you hear of a brother differing from you in views or in practice, rather than let it be an occasion for avoiding him, or meeting him with cold or averted looks, let it be a reason for going right to him in love and meekness. He may, perhaps, have a word in season just fitted to thy need, a caution, perhaps, which notwithstanding thou dost love thy Savior, is needed to correct some inconsistencies in thy life and walk; and thou who went to administer a rebuke, may thus find thyself reproved and admonished to thy help. Remember it is "according to the effectual working in the measure of every part," that the whole body "maketh increase unto the edifying of itself in love." This is true in regard to all societies—how much more true in regard to you, called by the name of Friends. Oh, how you being "fitly joined together and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth," might be built up, "an holy temple in the Lord!" This, dear friends, would be beginning at home—it would not

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be entering into difficult questions and abstruse theories with regard to the discipline or custom in the mutual relation of meetings—it would be among yourselves, where no rules would interfere, though practice may hitherto have done so.

Oh, think how much is at stake, ye fathers, and be warned in time! I feel that there is a generation growing up in your midst, who are in jeopardy of calling in question in some degree, the precious doctrine of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, because they do not see, in those who profess it, the fruit that ought to appear. This is a sad state of affairs, but I fear, my dear friends, it is only too true, and it loudly calls for a remedy. And I leave it to you as my parting message, that I believe the way to meet it and the only way, is by having "the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us,"—given unto us through our Lord Jesus Christ and *for his sake!*

After a pause, John Hodgkin rose again with these words ——— I seem called upon to revive the words of the prophet—"Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if we will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places, for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." May this never, never be your experience my beloved friends, but may "He who hath begun a good work in you carry it on until the day of Christ," and that He will do so I have faith to believe. May He draw you near together! May He comfort you with all consolation in Christ Jesus! May He bless you with the blessing wherewith He hath blessed the children of Israel, through the mouth of His servant Moses, saying—The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee, the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace!

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I cannot convey to you in words, beloved friends, the tender emotions of my heart in the thoughts of not seeing you again. For it is not merely natural love that unites us, but a measure of that love which is stronger than death, dwells in my heart for you, and in yours for me. May we be bound together not only by the tie of fellow-membership in the same beloved society, but also by being members of that one family, of whom our dear Lord and Master was not ashamed to call himself "the first-born among many brethren." May we abound in the riches of His grace! And at the last great day when "He shall come in His glory, and "shall sit upon the throne of His glory," may we all be found on His right hand, and hear the joyful sentence—"Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world! Amen."

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